

WHY CRIME DOES NOT PAY—

No. 10 of a Series of Extraordinary Revelations

Written by SOPHIE LYONS

The Most Famous and Successful Criminal of Modern Times, Who Made a Million Dollars in Her Early Criminal Career and Lost It at Monte Carlo, and Has Now Accumulated Half a Million Dollars in Honorable Business Enterprises

Written by Sophie Lyons.

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BY far the most remarkable criminal I ever knew was my friend, Mark Shimburn, the acknowledged "King of the Burglars."

"The safe I can't open, hasn't been built," he used to say—and the surprising frequency with which he made his boast good, caused the police everywhere to fear him more than any other man. The large sums he stole from banks every year threw American bankers into a panic, and they spent a cool million dollars in their efforts to put an end to his dangerous activities.

Mark Shimburn was a genius in burglary—a man before whose skill steel vaults opened noiselessly or crumbled violently according to his desire and method. He and his bands of operators stole many millions of bank funds. He stood at the head of his profession without a peer—and yet I shall show you, as I lead you through the amazing exploits of this great criminal's career, that even for one so skillful and "successful," CRIME DOES NOT PAY!

Shimburn revolutionized the burglars' methods and put them on a scientific basis. The banks feared him not only for the crimes which he himself committed, but because his wonderful inventive ability gave scores of other robbers the means of getting inside their strong boxes.

When Shimburn robbed his first bank, a burglar's tools were crude, cumbersome affairs, so heavy that three or four men and sometimes a horse and wagon were required to carry them around. This made the risk of detection very great, and when the burglars were forced to leave the scene of their crime in a hurry they would often have to leave their expensive tools behind.

Shimburn succeeded in remedying this difficulty. Not long after his appearance in the underworld he devised a practical set of tools more powerful than those formerly used and at the same time compact and light enough to be carried in a small satchel. This was a stroke of criminal genius which proved of tremendous advantage to him and every other burglar.

But Shimburn was not content with merely improving the tools of his criminal trade—he took up the study of safes and locks and soon became a greater expert in this line than any of the manufacturers could hire. As soon as a new safe was advertised, Shimburn secured one of them, took it to pieces and studied with the greatest care every detail of its construction. By the time the new make was fairly on the market he knew its strong and weak points better than the men who made it—and to prove he did, he robbed one of the new safes at the first opportunity.

He Learns Safe Making

Mark Shimburn called at our home in New York one day to bring an improved type of jimmy which he had devised and which my husband wanted for use in getting into a country bank we had our eyes on. The conversation turned, as it always did, to banks and safes and troublesome combination locks.

"What do you think of these new Little safes?" Ned Lyons said. "From what they say about them, they must be pretty hard nuts to crack. I see the company offers a reward of \$10,000 to the burglar who can get into one of them within any reasonable time."

"Nonsense!" Shimburn replied. "If they live up to that offer they'll go into bankruptcy. I'm going up to their factory to see for myself just how these new safes are made and by the time I've served my apprenticeship, I'll be ready to earn that reward every time I can lay my hands on a Little safe."

Shimburn had learned the mechanic's trade before coming to this country from Germany. Disguising his distinguished appearance as well as he could by shaving off his beard and putting on a suit of workman's clothes, he packed his tools into a satchel and went to Albany, where the Little safe works were located.

For two years Shimburn labored faithfully in the Little safe learning the construction of their safes from castors to combination locks. He was such a rapable mechanic that the superintendent regretted to hear that he was going to leave and offered to make him a foreman. But Shimburn said no—his health was not good and he had made up his mind to take a rest.

The truth of the matter was that he had learned everything there was to know about Little safes and was impatient to put his hard-earned knowledge to the practical test of burglary.

His first opportunity unexpectedly came in the robbery of the Ocean bank in New York. Shimburn laid the plans for this and carried them out with the assistance of Harry Raymond, George Bliss and Ned Lyons, my husband.

Shimburn had said little about his ex-

periences in Albany, and this made his friends inclined to think he had not found out as much there as he had expected. But this gave them no cause for worry, as they knew there were no Little safes in the Ocean Bank.

Underneath the Ocean Bank was a basement which had been vacant for some time. Raymond, posing as a dapper, energetic young merchant, about to open a stationery store, rented this from the bank officials. A partition was built to hide the back part of the basement, and the stock of goods began to arrive.

There were enough envelopes, account books and other such things to make quite a respectable showing in the front part of the store—there were also some very heavy boxes which Raymond had the truckman carry behind the partition, saying there was no need to open them at present.

These boxes contained the sledges, drills and crowbars with which the robbers planned to bore their way up through the ceiling and into the bank.

Through the day Raymond obligingly supplied the wants of his customers as well as he could with his limited stock. At night, when this business section of the city was practically deserted, Shimburn and the others joined him behind the partition and took turns at the arduous task of cutting away the thick ceiling and floor which separated them from the bank.

One evening, after the work had been going on for a week, Raymond had surprising news for his comrades—four brand new safes had been moved into the bank that afternoon.

"And," said Raymond, "they're all the new Little burglar proofs."

Raymond was plainly dismayed at this move on the bank's part—and so were my husband and George Bliss. But Shimburn, on the contrary, could not contain his delight.

"Just what I've been hoping would happen," he exclaimed. "Now I'll show you that I didn't spend two years at the Little Safe Works for nothing."

On a scrap of paper he drew a diagram of the lock used on the Little safe and showed them a dozen ways of solving its combination of which they had never dreamed.

Robbing the Ocean Bank

One way was by drilling a hole just below the dial and inserting through this a slender wire bent in a certain way to intercept the tumblers. Another way, very useful when it was easy to get access to the safe in advance of the actual robbery, was by loosening the dial and concealing a piece of paper underneath it. The numbers at which the lock was stopped when it was opened would leave very faint impressions on the paper. By studying these impressions under a microscope, Shimburn was able to tell what the numbers of the combination were.

Ned and Bliss and Raymond were amazed at the amount of knowledge Shimburn had acquired of safes and locks. When he finished talking they attacked the heavy oak timbers which formed the flooring of the bank with renewed vigor—confident that once they got inside the vault their wizard leader would do the rest.

It took nearly two weeks to cut the hole through the ceiling and floor. Late one Saturday evening the work was completed. Up a ladder the robbers climbed and squeezed their way through the narrow opening into the bank.

But they had not yet reached their goal. On account of the peculiar construction of the vault they had been unable to tunnel directly into it, and its thick walls of iron and masonry still remained between them and the bank's cash.

There was only one way to get inside—by tearing down one whole side of the vault. This took until late Sunday night.

As they had expected, there was nothing of value outside the safes. There were four of these—four Little safes, fresh from the factory, their brightly varnished sides glistening in the rays of the dark lanterns. The words "Guaranteed Burglar Proof," in his gilt letters at the top of each door, fairly shouted defiance to thieves.

Shimburn knelt down in front of the nearest safe. While his companions watched in silent awe he turned the dial back and forth.

He bent his ear over it, but the mechanism worked almost noiselessly. Only his delicate sense of touch could aid him in eliminating all the wrong combinations and selecting from the few remaining ones the proper rotation.

For five minutes, ten minutes, he turned that knob backward and forward. His companions could see no method in the operation—their tense faces showed their anxiety.

Presently he began to revolve the dial more slowly and with greater attention to the exact points at which he stopped its course.

Two short turns to the left, a long one in the same direction; back to the right just a trifle, followed by a turn that nearly completed the circumference, and then—

CLICK!

In the early morning quiet of that bank-



Sophie Lyons—the "Queen of the Burglars"

ing room the noise the tumblers of the lock made as they snapped into position rang out like a pistol shot. Ned and George Bliss jumped as if it had really been one and looked apprehensively over their shoulders.

Mark Shimburn alone seemed perfectly unconcerned. For half a minute he sat there motionless gazing at that lock as if he feared it might come to life and spring at his throat.

Then, suddenly, he jumped to his feet with a deep sigh of satisfaction. As he did so the heavy door of the safe, yielding to the gentle pressure of his hand which still clutched the knob, swung wide open.

The other three safes were as easily opened and the robbers took their pick of their precious contents.

The "Burglar-Proof" Safes

Just as day was breaking the robbers, with their satchels full of plunder, walked boldly out into Fulton street, leaving the bank's front door open behind them.

A scene of wild confusion met the eyes of the clerk who came to open the bank at 7 o'clock Monday morning and found that this duty had already been performed. Scattered among the debris which surrounded the ruined vault and the jagged hole in the floor were all the bank's papers and bags containing \$50,000 in gold coin. This last the robbers had been forced to leave because it was too heavy to carry.

In the midst of the ruin stood the four safes—their doors wide open and as empty as the day they left the factory. On top of one of them, scrawled on one of the bank's letterheads was this note:

I hereby authorize the cashier of the Ocean National Bank to collect the reward of \$10,000 offered by the Little Safe Company for opening this burglar-proof safe.

MARK SHIMBURN.

This was the beginning of the end for the Little safes. What Shimburn did to them at the Ocean Bank cast them into disrepute and the frequency with which he and his associates robbed them during the next few years made them the laughing stock of the financial world. The company that made them was eventually driven out of business—and all because its former employee, Mark Shimburn, chose to waste his remarkable talents of mind and body in a career of crime.

Although the Ocean Bank robbery was a very profitable one and its proceeds formed the basis of Shimburn's first fortune it was not the kind of undertaking he liked or in which he ever took much pride. He much preferred a robbery which required more ingenuity and more daring—like the one at Whitehaven, Pa., for example, where, after visiting a coal company's office six times in succession, he finally got away with \$120,000 single-handed.

From one of the mysterious sources on which every criminal depends for information Shimburn learned that this coal company was in the habit of keeping in its vault for three or four days every month from \$50,000 to \$75,000 in cash. This money which was used to meet the company's pay roll, was usually drawn from

the bank on the 18th of the month and was not disbursed before the 21st or 22d.

Shimburn went to Whitehaven and found the facts as given him to be correct. He introduced himself as a salesman for a machinery concern, went to live at the best hotel and devoted his time to getting acquainted and winning the town's good will.

Among the many people with whom he became intimate was the manager of the coal company. Naturally enough he fell into the habit of dropping into the company's office to see his friend. Two or three visits there were all Shimburn needed to get wax impressions of every key in the place—from the big one which unlocked the front door to the little one which opened the drawer in the vault where the manager kept his personal papers.

Shimburn carried the impressions to New York and with his own hands made duplicate keys. Returning to Whitehaven he visited the coal company's office one night to see if they fitted. They did, all but one—the key to the main door of the vault. This necessitated another trip to New York to have a new key made. This second key fitted perfectly and as he locked the vault and returned to his hotel he thought the company's money as good as in his pocket.

Shimburn's Persistence

"I'll be back about the 18th of the month," said Shimburn as he bade his Whitehaven friends goodbye for the third time in as many weeks.

The hotel proprietor had been informed that the genial machinery salesman from New York was a sufferer from insomnia and so he thought nothing strange when he started out for a walk shortly after midnight on the morning of the 19th. Had he not done the same thing many times before?

Reconnoitering from the shadow of a tree, Shimburn saw the town's lone watchman enter his house for the few hours' sleep which he stole every night. The coast was clear to rob the coal company.

He pulled from his pocket the bunch of keys he had made. No. 1 unlocked the outer door, No. 2 the wicket gate, No. 3 the outer door of the vault and so on until at last he was fumbling in the small safe where the cash was kept.

To his intense disgust he found the safe contained only \$1,500. Shimburn put \$150 of this in his pocket—"just to pay expenses," as he afterward told me. The rest of the money he put back where he had found it and carefully locked all the numerous doors again.

The next morning he learned why his plans had miscarried—for some trivial reason the company had paid off its employees a few days earlier than usual. On the 18th of the following month he was back in Whitehaven again and met with exactly the same experience—except that this time there was \$5,000 in the safe, and so he felt justified in deducting \$250 for "expenses!"

It is a good illustration of Shimburn's skill that on neither of these occasions did the company suspect that it had been robbed by an outsider. On the contrary, an employee was suspected of the theft each time and was promptly discharged.

With greater patience than any other burglar I ever knew Shimburn waited for the 18th of the next month to roll around. That was a characteristic of his—never to be satisfied with a small prize when there was a bigger one to be had by waiting.

The third month proved that he had done well to wait, for things turned out just as he had planned in the first place. He walked away from the office that night with \$60,000 in cash and an equal amount of negotiable securities in his pockets.

Disguised as a Servant Girl

In addition to being a mechanical expert Shimburn was an actor of no mean ability. He took particular delight in crimes where he had to assume disguises and deceive his prospective victims for a long time in advance of the actual robbery. One of the most remarkable feats in this line he ever performed was his robbery of a bank in Cadiz, Ohio.

Shimburn had been studying this bank from a distance for a long time. It seemed such a favorable opportunity that he finally sent Dave Cummings to Cadiz to look the situation over at close range.

Dave opened a small account at the bank, and by talking impressively of investments he planned to make soon won his way into the good graces of the cashier and other officials. During his frequent visits to the bank it was easy for him to secure wax impressions of the keys to the vault and safe.

But there were two serious obstacles which seemed likely to prevent Shimburn's ever using the keys which he made from these impressions.

One was the fact that the cashier lived with his wife and children right next to the bank—their house separated from it only by a narrow yard. The slightest noise in the bank was sure to wake them.

The other obstacle was a huge St. Bernard dog which the cashier locked up in the bank every night.

The dog was an unusually savage beast and had been trained to attack any one outside of the cashier and family who should set foot inside the bank. Dave Cummings had seen for himself what an efficient watchman the dog made on several occasions when the cashier had been working evenings and Dave had dropped in for a friendly call.

Such difficulties would have made the average burglar give the Cadiz bank a wide berth—but they only made Shimburn all the more eager to undertake the robbery.

He pondered over the problem for several weeks before he decided on a plan. Taking Dave Cummings and George Bliss into his confidence he told them to be in readiness to start for Cadiz as soon as they got word from him. Then Shimburn set out alone for Cincinnati, which was to be the base of his operations.

In Cincinnati he secured, through the assistance of a notorious "fence," all that he needed to transform himself into a German servant girl.

The disguise was perfect—even Shimburn's closest friends would never have recognized him in the clumsy, broad-hipped emigrant who finally took the train for Cadiz.

He wore a coarse gingham dress and carried on his shoulder a rough bundle, containing all his belongings. Over his curly blonde wig he wore an old-fashioned sunbonnet. This served a double purpose for the ribbons which tied it helped to conceal the deep dimple in his chin, which had often given detectives their first clue to his identity.

Even his speech did not betray him, for he pretended to be deaf and dumb. When some one spoke to him his fingers responded in the sign language, and when he bought his ticket at Cincinnati he wrote the word "Cadiz" in crude German script.

After a few days at a cheap emigrants' lodging house in Cadiz Shimburn, in the guise of Katrina Schmidt, secured employment as laundress in the home of Charles Snell, cashier of the bank.

Shimburn had provided himself with some bogus "references" of a very fine character. Katrina asked absurdly low wages, and this appealed to the thrifty bank cashier, who told his wife to give the "girl" a trial.

Shimburn had misgivings about being able to maintain his disguise as a woman servant if he applied for and secured the position of cook or any other job that required living in the house and having close relations with the family. But as a day's worker at washing clothes and living away from the house Shimburn figured he could act the part for a time without detection.

"That's a good girl you have there," said Snell approvingly to his wife, as he watched Shimburn plunge energetically into the family washing the next Monday morning. But while to disarm his employer's suspicion, Shimburn was assiduously attentive to his silent duties, his chief interest was centered in the big St. Bernard, which, during the day, was chained in a kennel in the backyard and at night was put on guard over the bank.

To this brute twice a day Shimburn carried the choicest bits of meat he could find. He petted him in every way he knew until at last the dog began to regard him as one of the family and would not growl or show

any sign of displeasure at his approach. Soon Mr. Snell got into the habit of taking Katrina every evening, and Shimburn was home from her work that mean-

"Come, take the dog over to the bank," When the dog had become accustomed to Katrina's presence under any and all conditions Shimburn fixed the night of robbery and sent for Cummings and Bliss.

That night Shimburn waited until the bank cashier's household was asleep, then, with Cummings and Bliss, climbed the fence into the back yard, crept into the house through the back window.

Shimburn handed them some plain clothes line and pointed the way to the upper rooms where the family was. Cummings entered the room where his wife lay in bed—frightened into silence with his revolver—then with knotted handkerchiefs bound them hand and foot to the bed. Bliss did this same thing with the little girl who slept in an adjoining room. While this was in progress Shimburn was busy putting on his skirt and wig, which he had brought along in a bundle and when he knew was fast asleep he went to the bank.

Going downstairs they joined Shimburn and the three of them crossed the street to the bank. As Shimburn turned the outer door the dog began to bark savagely, but the sight of the familiar of the servant girl reassured him.

The astonished brute sniffed the trust of the kindly laundress he had learned to love, and made no further remonstrance.

\$100,000 in Plunder

He offered no resistance when Shimburn seized him by the collar, led him to the cellar and chained him to a post.

With Shimburn's perfectly fitted keys the vault and safe were easily opened no time at all their contents—nearly \$100,000 in cash and securities—were packed away in the robbers' satchels. Shimburn exchanged his feminine attire for a suit of men's clothes which Bliss Cummings had brought. Then the men locked up the bank, threw the key away and jumped into a lively team which was waiting around the corner.

But Shimburn, in neglecting to dog out of the cellar before he bank, had made a mistake which was proving disastrous. The rats who feasted the cellar terrified the dog he set up a terrific barking. By three robbers were a mile from the whole neighborhood had been by the racket.

The neighbors hurried to the house and getting no answer knocked broke down the door. As the frightened cashier and his family set free the robbery was discovered armed posse at once set out to search for the robbers.

How Bullard, the



Mark Shimburn had completely dropped out of the underworld suddenly and so thoroughly had his famous burglary disappeared from horizon that not even one of his friends and fellow cracksmen had slightest clue to his whereabouts indeed, he was alive at all.

But one day a strange thing happened. Charley Bullard, a well-known burglar and old partner of Shimburn, had found things too hot for him in America, and he decided to try his field of endeavor to some banks in Europe. Bullard did a work in London, cracked a safe